

**MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON**

Date: November 19, 2025

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a work session at 6:00 p.m. via live-stream and broadcast on KRVM. Notice of the meeting was emailed to the media and posted on the 4J website on November 14, 2025.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Di Liberto
Ericka Thessen
Maya Rabasa
Jenny Jonak
Judy Newman
Morgan Munro
Rick Hamilton

ABSENT:

None

STAFF:

Miriam Mickelson, Superintendent
Carmen Xiomara Urbina, Chief of Staff
Matt Brown, Director of Finance
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Jeff Johnson, Director of Elementary Education
Jen Bills, Director of Safety and Emergency Management
Juan Carlos Cuadros, Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
Oscar Loureiro, Director of Research and Planning
Erin Gaston, Curriculum Administrator
Katie Stiles, K-5 Curriculum TOSA
Ed Mendelssohn, College and Career Readiness Administrator
Andy Hock, Project Based Learning & Community Outreach Specialist
Sara Justice, Instructional Coaching Coordinator
Sarah Knudsen, Literacy Specialist
Katie Stiles, Literacy Specialist
Kyle Tucker, Chief Operations Officer
Brooke Wagner, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services
Cynthia Calletano, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff/Board
Lisa Fjordbeck, Operations Manager for the Superintendent's Office

OTHER GUESTS:

None

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS:

Jamie Meyers, Eugene Education Association (EEA) President

Dave Wines, Eugene Education Association (EEA) Vice President

Lisa Jenkins-Easton, Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) President

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Chair Di Liberto called the Eugene School District 4J work session to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. BOARD CHAIR WELCOME

Chair Di Liberto reported on Board of Director's (BOD) activities:

- Attendance at Arts and Technology (ATA) lunch hour and karaoke event
- Attendance at Ruby Bridges marches throughout the district
- Attendance at an Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) conference in Portland
- A Board member serving as a panelist in the Courageous Conversations class at South High School
- A Board member visit to the Chavez Elementary School Library
- Face to face meetings with other local school districts

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

There were no changes to the agenda.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Di Liberto read the rules of engagement for public comment during a work session.

Rebecca Gourgey provided comments about her experience as a special educator at South Eugene High School. On the topic of Career and Technical Education (CTE), she said since the start of Future Build and the addition of Creative Currents in EmpowerED and HumaniTech, she has witnessed roughly 20 students from her caseload participate in the programs. She said their successes are unparalleled compared with any other program in the district. She provided a personal story about one of her students and added that her students have accomplished a 100% completion rate over the past three years. She urged the district to recognize the value of CTE programs in light of current budget constraints.

V. COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) President Lisa Jenkins-Easton requested to speak following the monthly finance report.

VI. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

**1. APPROVE THE DRAFT BOARD MEETING MINUTES FOR: NOVEMBER 5, 2025
BOARD MEETING**

2. APPROVE ROUTINE PERSONNEL ACTIONS

MOTION: Vice Chair Thessen moved to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Jonak seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

VII. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

**1. RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CENTER FOR APPLIED LEARNING
AND COMMUNITY IMPACT (CALCI)**

CALCI Administrator Ed Mendelssohn and CALCI TOSA Andy Hock provided an update from the Center for Applied Learning and Community Impact (CALCI) via PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Mendelssohn said that 4J CTE has 21 programs, 28.32 FTE, 33 teachers, and over 3,000 students. He provided information about which programs are at which schools. He shared statistics illustrating the benefits of CTE, primarily for students' post-graduation, as they embark on their career or college pathways.

He showed a slide depicting that regional research found a gap in the system, including that students do not have the skills and resumes that employers want, and that schools do not have the resources to create the opportunities that will motivate students to develop them. He said through partnership and talking with CTE, they have landed on a model that helps bridge the readiness gap, known as the Collective Impact Project, combining community, education, and industry.

Mr. Hock described a Collective Impact Project known as Play Without Limits in which students are building adaptive toys for young people who experience disabilities. He said Lane STEM Hub is providing additional resources for the program. He invited Board members to a showcase happening on Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. at South Eugene High School. He mentioned other Collective Impact Projects including, but not limited to, Everyone Village and Creative Current Branding.

Mr. Mendelssohn articulated challenges with enrollment and capacity. He said Future Build is a fully mature program. Other programs have nowhere near the capacity, but they have ideas about how to increase it. He emphasized results and asked that staff be included in district leadership discussions.

Mr. Hock provided information related to attracting historically marginalized students to CTE programs. He said 41% of 4J CTE students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a 504, or have attended special education classes – demonstrating meaningful opportunities for students.

He said they have received state funding in addition to over \$170,000 in grants and donations, signaling community support.

Mr. Mendelssohn said their intent now is to take the lessons learned and results they have seen and leverage them into other district programs.

Mr. Mendelssohn and Mr. Hock opened the floor to questions from the BOD.

Vice Chair Thessen commented about the positive community impacts she has observed thanks to Future Build.

Ms. Newman asked what kind of efforts are made to link graduates with apprenticeships.

Mr. Mendelssohn said that they are partnering with Connected Lane County, University of Oregon (UO), and Lane Workforce Partnership.

Ms. Munro asked how much their department uses information from Lane Workforce about economic gaps for employees and applicants and specific trades they wish to support in the community when looking at course offerings and programs they develop.

Mr. Mendelssohn said they are getting better at it, and provided a couple of examples.

Ms. Munro asked about the experience for students who complete a CTE pathway versus those who take one or two courses.

Mr. Mendelssohn responded that as a student persists in a program, they develop a more sophisticated and robust skillset; and that at the intermediate and advanced levels students are beginning to practice, demonstrate, and connect with industry.

Mr. Hock added that students in advanced level classes receive industry-recognized credentials.

In closing, Mr. Mendelssohn stated that although CTE was previously viewed as an elective, it is clear that it is an absolutely necessary pathway to many students' futures.

2. RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON DISTRICT LITERACY INITIATIVE

Elementary Curriculum Administrator Erin Gaston, Literacy Specialist Sarah Knudsen, Instructional Coaching Coordinator Sara Justice, and Literacy Specialist Katie Stiles provided an update on district literacy initiatives via PowerPoint presentation.

Ms. Gaston outlined the following Early Literacy Goals:

- Improve foundational literacy outcomes for all students, with an emphasized focus on students in our focal group
- Provide teachers with high quality instructional materials and essential professional learning to meet students' early needs
- Empower teachers with systems and resources to identify students at risk of reading difficulties and effectively intervene
- Identify and fill gaps in instruction, materials, and outcomes to ensure all students have access to the support they need when they need it

She outlined Early Literacy grants:

An annual investment of about \$1,350,000 in K-5 literacy

- 1) ODE's Early Literacy Grant
 - a. Curriculum and Materials
 - b. Professional Development and Coaching
 - c. High Dosage Tutoring
 - d. Staffing Specialists
 - e. Extended Learning
- 2) Comprehensive State Literacy Development Grant (CLSD)
 - a. Supplemental Curriculum
 - b. Professional Development
 - c. Staffing Specialists
 - d. Intervention and Support
 - e. Family Engagement

Professional Development:

- Foundations training for all K-3 teachers included observing in peers' classrooms and deepening understanding of routines and structures within foundational literacy
- LETRS training for 280+ teachers
- Wit and Wisdom training for instructional coaches, principals, and 4th/5th grade teachers
- Tier 2 intervention materials for K-5 and best practices for small group instruction
- Effective practices for screening students for intervention
- Dual language literacy alignment at Spanish immersion schools
- Teacher training about Science of Reading updates within the ARC curriculum

Staff presented Instructional Coaching, noting that every elementary school has an instructional coach who provides essential literacy supports to individual teachers, grade level teams, and the building as a whole.

- Instructional coaching coordinator to develop a professional learning program for building-based coaches
- Support teachers in Tier 1 and 2 instruction and materials
- Lead building-wide and grade level data team meetings to inform instructional decisions to meet the needs of all learners
- Support teachers during and after professional learning by coaching teachers looking to enhance their practice with newly acquired skills
- Building-wide PD developed in response to SCIP plans
- Guide teachers through coaching cycles – goal setting, learning, data collection, and reflecting to refine practice

Curriculum and Materials:

A significant amount of resources have been added to buildings to support literacy instruction

- Foundations decodable readers for every K-2 classroom
- Level 3 Geodes
- High interest decodables for older readers
- Phonics for Reading and Rewards curriculum for 4th and 5th grade intervention
- Updated teacher guides and student facing materials for ARC
- ACR aligned Spanish and English decodable texts K-1

High Dosage Tutoring:

A Walk to Read intervention model was piloted at Howard and Chavez to provide as many students as possible with targeted, small group reading intervention.

- Developing a comprehensive K-3 reading intervention curriculum using the Foundations scope and sequence and routines and research-backed strategies for reading instruction
- Adding 10 hours of classified staffing to each building for dedicated High Dosage Tutors
- Training all teachers and EAs in the intervention curriculum
- Supporting using data to make informed decisions about student needs
- Coaching teachers and EAs throughout the year in effective small group instruction

Outcomes:

212 total students in both schools got at least 30 minutes of high dosage tutoring in groups of no more than 4:1 at least 4 days a week

- 88% of all students demonstrated growth
- 91% of English Language Learners demonstrated growth
- 89% of Hispanic students demonstrated growth
- 84% of students with disabilities demonstrated growth

What's Next?:

- Examine disparate reading outcomes and develop plans to ensure all students achieve at high levels
- Expand and systematize both Walk to Read and High Dosage Tutoring to benefit more students
- Analyze instruction and practices in classrooms in which students experience significant literacy gains to identify key instructional moves and scale them district-wide
- Complete a comprehensive needs assessment, inclusive of teacher voice
- Develop clear MTSS structures and processes for reading at all three tiers of instruction

Ms. Jonak asked if the work also helps inform literacy supports through middle and high school.

Ms. Gaston responded that the state has released an adolescent literacy plan to expand and support the upper grades.

Ms. Newman inquired about feedback they have received from teachers.

Ms. Gaston responded that there is a survey component of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Ms. Jonak asked if training and other resources are available to classified staff such as EAs and SPED EAs.

Ms. Gaston responded that some trainings are available to them. She said they are not able to offer LETRS training specifically for classified staff.

Ms. Rabasa asked if the district needs to select new curriculum every seven years.

Ms. Gaston clarified that the district does not need to select new curriculum, but they do need to review the materials to ensure they align with state standards, then affirm and adopt them.

Ms. Rabasa suggested including a question about the impact of curriculum on an educator's relationship with their work, specifically whether it has impacted them positively, negatively, or neutrally.

Ms. Gaston responded affirmatively.

Chair Di Liberto requested data related to how educators create the time for other core subjects.

Ms. Gaston referenced an instructional minutes guidance document, providing recommended minutes for each of the different content areas.

Responding to a question posed by Ms. Munro about district versus state reading score data, Ms. Gaston explained that the district uses Easy CBM, which is a very different measure of application of reading skills than Smarter Balance, the more robust measure used by the state. She said Easy CBM scores are generally higher than Smarter Balance outcomes.

Responding to another question from Ms. Munro, Ms. Gaston described reading interventions.

Ms. Rabasa asked about the distribution of hours for High Dosage Tutoring.

Ms. Gaston responded that the goal was to add two additional five-hour EAs. She mentioned that the classified tutors work closely with the classroom teachers.

3. RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE SYSTEMWIDE VOICES ENGAGEMENT RESULTS: INPUT FROM STAFF, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY ON 2026-27 BUDGET PRIORITIES

Chief of Staff Carmen Xiomara Urbina reported on the Systemwide Voices Engagement Results: Input from Staff Families, and Community on 2026-27 Budget Priorities via PowerPoint presentation.

She explained that the results are from the ThoughtExchange engagement during fall 2025. She said there was a strong wide-ranging participation across the community.

She shared the purpose:

- Share key themes from six participants engagement groups
- Show where voices are aligned – and where they diverge
- Highlight systemwide risks and priorities
- Connect this input to our 2026-27 budget guardrails
- Set up Phase II decision-making for January-March

She provided a participation snapshot, revealing a total of 1,386 participants and deep engagement with 67,422 ratings submitted.

Ms. Urbina highlighted the following ‘North Star,’ shared across all groups: “Protect what directly touches students. Streamline what doesn’t. Be transparent about how we get there.”

She introduced a table depicting alignment across participant groups and key themes, noting that all groups agree on the following:

- Protect classroom and student-facing supports
- Reduce administrative overhead / increase efficiency
- Protect SPED and behavioral and mental health supports
- Fiscal transparency and clear communication
- Keep equity at the center of decisions

She briefly introduced areas of diversion and systemwide risk themes.

Ms. Urbina highlighted the following priorities:

- Protect Non-negotiables: *Keep dollars close to students.*
- Redesign – Make Systems Leaner and Cleaner: *Streamline what doesn’t touch students every day.*
- Pause / De-implement – Where participants see flexibility: *Step back from what is low impact or unsustainable*

She shared the requested commitment moving forward:

- Keep dollars closest to students
- Make equity measurable and sustainable
- Improve operational efficiency
- Communicate early, often, and transparently
- Partner with families, staff, and community

Ms. Urbina opened the floor to questions and comments from the BOD.

Responding to a question posed by Ms. Newman about the methodology used in the ThoughtExchange, Ms. Urbina said that the program allows them to access and create the metrics and then conduct meta-analysis. She said what would otherwise take up to 15 days is completed in three days with ThoughtExchange.

4. RECEIVE MONTHLY FINANCE REPORT

Finance Director Matt Brown presented a monthly finance update via PowerPoint presentation.

He showed a line graph depicting that enrollment is following a predictable pattern as compared with previous years.

He showed a line graph depicting that general fund revenue is also following a predictable pattern as compared with previous years. They expect a significant uptick in revenue as property taxes come in in November.

Mr. Brown showed a line graph depicting general fund expenses, including that expenses have remained steady, and not increased, as a result of district changes around purchasing policies and credit cards. They anticipate the trend continuing through November.

He said general fund over/under spending is also on trend with previous years.

He highlighted two tables: an October financial summary and general fund budget-to-actual, noting that both revenue and expenditures were higher than the previous year.

Mr. Brown closed by stating that the Financial Audit is now completed.

Concerning the Financial Audit, Ms. Munro asked if there were any material findings.

Mr. Brown responded that there was one significant deficiency and there were two material weaknesses. He described the reasons for the findings and said they were resolved.

Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) President Lisa Jenkins-Easton provided comments describing the frustration OSEA members are feeling as contract negotiations continue. She cited budget choices related to contract negotiations. She said they were assured during school board elections that voting to add 3% to the reserves would not impact bargaining. Ms. Jenkins-Easton emphasized that classified employees are volunteering numerous hours of their time to complete the bargain, and this contract negotiation has taken twice as long as the previous one. She raised concerns about district timeliness and communications.

5. REVIEW BOARD POLICY DI-FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND DISCUSS THE DISTRICT'S RESERVE FUND

Superintendent Mickelson and Mr. Brown presented a review of Board Policy DI-Financial Management Policies and Discuss the District's Reserve Fund via PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Brown reminded the Board that the current reserve policy was adopted in February 2025. He provided the following updates:

- Creates flexibility for updates as needed
- Sets Minimum for General Fund at 8%
 - Based on Operating Expenditures each year
 - 3% Contingency
 - 5% Unappropriated
- How much does a percent cost? (\$270 million budget ~ 1% = \$2.7M)
 - 10% = \$2.70M
 - 8% = \$21.6M
 - 5% = \$13.5M
 - 3% = \$8.1M
- Purpose for Change
 - Volatility of Federal and State Funds
 - What if Title Funds were suddenly gone?
 - What if Special Education funds were suddenly gone?
 - State School Fun and Integrated Guidance reductions
 - The difference between 1 last paycheck and 2 or 2
 - Reduction of “extra” funds in General Fund
 - Typically set aside funds for the Superintendent to hire additional staff when students return
 - Mid-year changes / needs within schools and departments
- Payroll for Eugene School District
 - Average monthly payroll is \$25M

He presented a graph showing the current forecast if no changes are made. He presented a graph reflecting if the reserve policy was changed to 5%.

Mr. Brown presented a graph depicting how the current 8% reserve policy will affect the budget through the 2026-27 school year.

He presented a graph depicting how adopting a 5% reserve policy would affect the budget through the 2026-27 school year.

He noted that the dollar difference between 5% and 8% is roughly \$7.5 million. He reiterated that the district is spending more than it is bringing in and emphasized the need for a sustainable reserve policy. He provided regional district reserve rate comparisons.

Mr. Brown, Superintendent Mickelson, and the BOD engaged in a robust discussion about the district's reserve policy.

Superintendent Mickelson requested that any changes to the reserve policy be made at the December 10, 2025 Board meeting.

VIII. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. VOTE IN OREGON SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION (OSBA) ELECTIONS

Chair Di Liberto provided relevant background information before engaging the BOD in an election process.

MOTION: Vice Chair Thessen moved to support Maya Rabasa for OSBA Board of Director Position 6. Ms. Newman seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 6:0:1; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, and Ms. Munro all voting in favor. Mr. Hamilton abstained.**

MOTION: Vice Chair Thessen moved to support Judy Newman for OSBA Legislative Policy Committee Position 6. Ms. Rabasa seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Di Liberto, Vice Chair Thessen, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Jonak, Ms. Newman, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

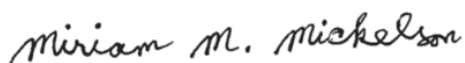
IX. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

1. CONSIDER PROPOSED REVISIONS TO POLICY AC – NONDISCRIMINATION

Ms. Nesbit provided information about proposed revisions to Policy AC – Nondiscrimination. She said the changes are necessary to align with new ODE regulations and policy requirements.

X. ADJOURN

Chair Di Liberto adjourned the work session at 8:56 p.m.



Miriam Mickelson, Superintendent



Tom Di Liberto, Chair

Recorded by Terah Van Dusen, LCOG